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The Basis

of our belief in the Existence and attributes of God

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"Canst thou by searching find out God." Job. XI - 7 -

The Basis of our belief in the Existence and Attributes of God

No matter, how far back into the misty past of human history, we push our inquiries,- we ever find in man,- the belief in the existence of some higher than his own wisdom,- some power that could hold in abeyence even the laws of nature, Partly shrouded though it may be, in ignorance, superstition or vice,- it nevertheless is plainly discernible through the gloom,- shining forth as does a beacon lamp- amidst the fogs of night.— Underneath all the highly colored Fables of the Gods; All the wild and extravagant super=

stitions - the ridiculous pomp and ceremony of the ancient feasts and sacrifices;- Underneath all this, ran the powerful current of faith in the Divine,- itself the deep broad river; these but the play of the eddies, and ripples upon its surface.-

As mankind have advanced, this faith has grown with civilization. It has deepend, and broadened, with the expansion of thought;- As man's whole nature has developed itself,- the eye of faith has grown clearer and stronger,- and has caught nobler glimpses of God,— Trace in your mind the long list of Prophets, which have arisen from time to time,- in all ages, and from every nationality,- Mark how the revelation through them, has grown purer and more distinct, step by step,

until, to day, God is to man no longer the capricious and passionate Being as of old;- but is the Infinitely loving and Just Father of all his works.

And until we have learned, that not merely does He reveal himself once or twice in a century, through specially gifted men,- but that faith is the prophetic vision of the soul,- in which each may see at least something of His glory,- From Fetichism into Polytheism, out of the various forms of Polytheism into the Jewish Monotheistic faith,- and thence into a purer Christian Monotheism- this faith has developed itself;- keeping pace with the progress of man,- and indeed as I think - leading the upward march,-

But at length the intellect began to more authoritatively assert ~~it~~ its

... back more definite results.— On the ... hand the great body of Religious men, ... me too much for their faith,— and ... it is deeply tinged with superstition ... merits criticism— for they brand as ... atheist every man, who essays ... candidly to criticise it.— Yet mankind ... have, and never can advance ... — for notwithstanding ... assurances of the Intellect.— it is ... only sure guide for our step...

Still we should be careful not to ... undervalue the Reason,— for although ... its upon faith, have ... to subvert it,— a great work ... accomplished in ... ,— As the wind separates the ... from the wheat— so many an old ... stition— with which faith was mingled, ... ,— ...

of an Infinite Intelligence, could not create
mind & reason;- for there is nothing
in the outer world to support it, in the
mind of an undeveloped man.— The
Student of Nature does indeed, trace the
tiniest foot/prints of Deity, at
of the Universe,- But the plodding
man of the world,— who seizes it as
only knows that it rains- and cares no
farther;- who comes to look upon all
the processes of nature as quite a matter
of course— nothing wonderful:- to such
a man who is entirely absorbed in
days out of the seven - in the routine of
business,- the idea of God, would be utterly
unreal,- and would soon pass
consciousness altogether, were it not
grounded in something deeper than mere
human evidence.

Now since this belief does not come

through reasoning.— nor by tradition.— it
must come out of the very nature of mind.
It is a necessity of thought.— It is an uni=
versal instinct.— I care not how you
explain its origin farther than that,— or
by what name you call it;— whether Intuition
or inherited experience.— The instinct to
trust and worship a Divine Being, is just
as universal as the instinct to eat,— and
just as reliable.— Remembering then that
the belief in God is common to all races of
men, and to all ages of human history.—
and that with the mass of mankind it is
an instinctive belief of the soul;— let us see if
it be possible to originate our belief in any
other manner;— if it be possible to prove
the existence of God by any course of pure
reasoning.— The A Posteriori argument
has been advanced, by those who looked
upon faith as unreliable,— and they have

claimed to be able to demonstrate God and his attributes,— The Law of Causality, is at once the base, and pedistal of this argumentative column,— It marks its beginning and its end,— This fact indeed we [illegible] it shows that our dependence upon the [illegible], is only through faith.— We catch glimpses now and then of the relation between cause and effect,— or once call it [illegible] of some cause.— and that cause in turn is itself the result of some cause farther back,— But assuming that our knowledge of such a law comes through experience, are we able to found upon it,— a tower of Babel,— by which to climb up to God?—

We are unable to classify and generalize [illegible]

[illegible] intelligent, [illegible] of a designing

[illegible] the Common Observa-

intelligence,— like the astronomer who observes the motions of the planets and studies the laws of their motion, so like it perfect working demands the existence of another world,— He even calculates the size, time of Revolution, and position of the [illegible] of the [illegible] is known to the assimilated point, [illegible] in the immediate [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible] of its existence,— The astronomer has only discovered a law which had been quietly at work since the creation. Ours "[illegible] the [illegible] of the Creator after Him."— [illegible] we clearly prove the necessity for an intelligent

~~first~~ cause,- But it stops here,- It can never of itself tell us of God, the Infinite and absolute.- Even we have reached the farthest point in the argument, there is still an infinite abyss, between us and the God we seek,- an abyss which only faith can bridge,- For all the knowledge of the outer world- the Universe at large, which experience brings to us,- teaches us that it is finite, subject to change.- That it sometime had a beginning, and must sometime come to an end,- I say that without faith- this is, all that experience can teach us of the nature of the Universe, From my first - of causation we can only prove the existence of any efficient cause,- A cause fully adequate to produce the given result,- From a finite Universe we can only prove a finite first cause. This cause cannot be the God we seek

For if it is finite we must supply its cause— and that again must be the result of some [illegible] behind,— and so on backward to all infinity,— for we are as far from the first Cause as ever,— our method of [illegible] endless and endless as [illegible], as the division of a repeating decimal,—

Equally [illegible] are we to [illegible] of perfect wisdom and [illegible] of [illegible],— for without that faith in the Divine, which transcends all experience— the Universe is full of Evil,— There is little or no harmony in Nature.— Pestilence and war stalk through the land, and wherever their black shadows fall, there is irretrievable ruin,— Storms scatter desolation over the face of nature, and we fail to see the compensating good.—

All the animal world is in a state of
one continued warfare for existence.

"The Falcon preys upon the Finch,
"the Finch upon the Worm;
"that mangled can loose the hunger pinch,
"but human wild cruel"

It is utterly impossible for man to
reconcile through Experience alone, the
idea of Universal Order and perfect
Harmony in the Universe. — The Account
of reasoning upon the reports of the senses
comprises all the belief in an Infinite
Intelligence, ordaining the course of events
in accordance with a perfect plan.
The idea of God then, can never be attained
by the belief that must spring up from
within the mind. — When we have climbed
to the summit of Creation's loftiest peak, —
when, lifting up the night, — we look
beyond the boundary of the living world, —

basis of that belief. I wish now to consider briefly the nature of that faith, what it tells us concerning God, and how much confidence is to be placed upon the same.

And what then is faith? The term [illegible] [illegible], or willful belief [illegible] [illegible] without investigation, and it must be confessed that a great deal of this sort of thing has been miscalled faith. There always has been [illegible] a large class of people in the world who — gathering up their self righteous skirts, retreat before the advance of every new idea or new movement, — regarding it with a suspicious eye, — ever arraying themselves in readiness to resist all the approaches upon them; — and, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] their faith.

But true faith has nothing to fear
[illegible] science or reform,— and will not
[illegible] scientific investigation of
[illegible],— Only the shadows of
[illegible] flee before the rising sun of
[illegible],— True faith — like mother Earth,
[illegible] is the warm life giving rays with
[illegible]
And as the morning sun,
[illegible] looking through it
interiors of nature; So the bridal kiss
ith which the new birth greets the old
rth, foretells the higher growth, and the
r and stronger life, which shall spring
[illegible] Heaven,—

There are three, two [illegible] meanings of the word faith — common in the
[illegible]d, — both as I think erroneous.— One
class hold it to be the belief in some
[illegible] of religion — in the inspiration
and infallibility of certain sacred books.

The blind asse[illegible]
creeds or doctrines, is by them called faith,
[illegible]
eternal welfare is thought to depend.

So we hear of a Christian faith, a
Mohammedan faith &c.- But faith is in
its essence one & the same, universally- The
different religions, are only its different
forms of manifestation, at different points
of its development.- Yet many Christians
even,- entirely lose sight of any deeper
significance, that this which is its mere
shell.- They lose sight of the spirit, in
their worship of the letter.-

The other class will tell you
that all faith is but an idle dream,-
or is the confession of a mans ignorance.
Nothing [illegible]
[illegible] in the sense- that is not
practical [illegible]

Faith as I understand it, is in its
lowest sense,- the instinct of trust.- It
is thus the basis of all Science.- all
Philosophy.- [illegible] knowl-
edge to us, unless we trust the faculties
through which it was obtained,-
By instinct by just faith in the existence
of the outer world which our senses
report to us.- For a [illegible],
could ever convince us of the truth
of any Proposition.- did we not trust
the faculty of reason.- [illegible] it is the
very instinct, which [illegible] us certain of
our own existence,- It is the basis of
all, mental, moral, and spiritual growth,-
It is to [illegible] what the
[illegible] is to the wing,- Without it
we would grovel in the dust - lower
than the brute,- With its aid, we
may [illegible] the [illegible]

properly. - Instead of the warring and
jangling conditions of affairs and events
in the outer world, of which the senses
tell him, - there springs up in the soul
instinctively - or in some mood of self
intuitively - the conception of the perfect order,
and perfect harmony - of the Universe as a
whole. - Still it is the outer world
gives us [illegible] world as we see
it, - and hence I say this faith arises
here & divides itself. - one part of thing
in the ordinary - the other the ideal
I am [illegible] of the ideal

a perfect whole, - is not however necessary
to the formation of an idea of God. —

But we [illegible] spring, or necessity
the same manner, - A. the mind
[illegible] A. imperfect, dependant, limited.
with the power [illegible] to [illegible]
a [illegible] A. infinite and perfect, - A.
[illegible] and [illegible] the
measure [illegible] which [illegible] can be
[illegible], - he may be utterly unable to give
him a [illegible] statement of this belief. -
But [illegible] who [illegible] to the why, and
wherefore, - the mind will rest in it's rest. -

And [illegible], this is the true and
only origin [illegible] of [illegible] this in God.
He [illegible] and it through the intellect.
Through the intellect [illegible] - and [illegible] understand
[illegible] or modify it, into a [illegible]
[illegible], - so [illegible] the instinctive
[illegible] of [illegible] it. Then the infinite.
The [illegible] heard [illegible] - yet we have
[illegible] in [illegible] - the knowledge [illegible] - [illegible]
[illegible] - in [illegible] —

[illegible]

development and intensity - [illegible]

[illegible] have said that the [illegible]

view by the lessons of life, differ, with the

strength of of this instinctive trust. - One

[illegible] - it is [illegible]

with the black abyss of doubt and despair,

and an through life seeing no harmony

within or without him. - Still I believe, this

faith is in his nature - and can not be

entirely crushed out; - but that it will some-

time rise and assist itself. - Again there is

a man who passes through trial, temptation

and affliction, and they only serve to mak[illegible]

with the stronger, - There another

man can only occasionally - in his [illegible]

ments, place his hand in that of

[illegible]

his whole life [illegible] specialist of his race, - the King of mankind. - Even Christ once wavered, and in the anguish of his horrible death, - the cry "[illegible]" came from his lips. - It is not to be denied, that [illegible] nature [illegible] - Still I am unable to see, why there is not as sound for calling consciousness, as for calling thought, - delusion, - Could those men who deny the existence of the other world, - do so only in theory practically - they eat when hungry - in manner, - and [illegible] in matters of things [illegible] - such I doubt it in time of trouble, their

heart does not as instinctively lift itself upward - and pray "God help me;-

This faith then which, in its lowest form,- is an instinct - and acts as we say blindly.- through the aid of experience- develops into a belief in God- as a Being of Infinite Love and power.- And this explains what in me, has been a great stumbling block, I mean the power to form Ideas.- I can not see how we could, the Idea of God, power, &c.- ever exist in the mind of a Child,- For an Idea can not exist, unless the mind is conscious of it,- But knowing — this — in the mind of a Possibility,- the child,- the Revival of what which was put into the ground, is not mad- but is all the head- germ.

But we must commit [illegible]

that this faith in God is not a delusion?

What shall we answer to the Skeptical man, who pronounces it a dream?

But that we need any specious reasoning to establish our own faith, - the man in whose breast it is strong, needs no [illegible] proof of its truth, - the existence of God is to him as real, and tangible, as his own, - But there are many - and alas! more I fear than we think - with whom this trust is weaker, - and in the struggle with doubt, faith too often goes to the wall, - and is placed in slavish chains. With such men - this instinct needs to be guided and strengthened, - And to do this it seems to me, is the great work of the Christian Minister of to day -

The old a Priori argument, is that the necessary idea of God involves

the necessary existence of God, — that
[illegible] statement [illegible] explanation
tion or elaboration of it which I have
ever seen — could satisfy me —
[illegible] and find that [illegible]
and find that [illegible] need — every want
of the Physical Universe [illegible] to
correspond with; [illegible] in the
of the animal)
prove a wise [illegible] — Can I think that
any the last & crowning work of
creation, — is possessed of instincts which
are worse than useless and which only
serve to lead [illegible] astray? — Nothing
is [illegible] as an essential part of its
nature, — every & any survivor, that
there is a reality corresponding to it, —
"that in the [illegible] like the Scriptures,
and the instinct [illegible] of the soul" — are not
the instinct of trust in man speak of the
reality of something on which we may depend?

How then shall a man say - I will rely upon faith so far as it serves to convince of the truth of the reports of the senses - and of the validity of the results of reason, but beyond that it is a blind guide — a delusion; - I will give faith — faith in the ideal of perfect holiness - faith in the infinite and absolute God, & scorn idle speculations, -

My argument for the Existence of God, is that the same faith which tells us of the truth of science - and the reality of the outer world, - also develops into what we call the Necessary idea of God. - We have seen that this idea could arise in no other manner than through some instinctive tendency of the mind; - and I endeavored to show that faith was that instinct. - And now if faith is to be our guide at one point, - it should

be at all.— If perfect unwavering trust in the [illegible] of the Universe,— then [illegible] perfect and unwavering trust in God— argue this real existence,— [illegible] the [illegible] first cause of all things;— through the Posteriori methods of reasoning, we are at once involved— as we have already seen— in a difficulty— over whose walls we are unable to surmount,— the can get [illegible] beyond dependent causes.— I can never rest in this,— but is obliged to postulate an [illegible] and absolute first cause,— This alone I think would not argue the existence of such a cause;— for it might be justly said, that the idea arose from the impotency of the mind

yet it [illegible] contains the idea of God which instinctively springs up within us. —

This Belief is further verified by observation and experience. — As we carry it with us out into active life, every day adds to it new strength. — There is a God! All Nature interspersed by this with declares it. — There is a wise and loving Father of all. — who guides the destinies of Nations and individuals, — All history teems with assertions of this truth. —

I have very little time or space left, [illegible] consideration of the Attributes of God; — I acknowledge that He is, — involves also [illegible] Knowledge of what he is. — We cannot [illegible] his existence, without [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], — We say that He is infinite, — That is — we [illegible] unlimited, [illegible] [illegible] necessary idea [illegible] is a [illegible] Being, Unlimited, —

unconditioned - Infinite - We cannot it is true form a perfect image, in our minds of Infinity - for we can only think, in time and space, - Yet the very fact that the word exists - is proof that that there is an idea - inadequate though it may be, - embodied in it, - We say God is Absolute - for as he is the Infinite first cause, - He must depend upon Himself alone for his existence. We say He is a God of Infinite wisdom and goodness - and is the embodiment of perfect love, - These terms are to a great extent inclusive of each other, - For example, my Ideal of perfect wisdom - includes justice mercy and love, - Our belief in these attributes, springs up, as does our belief in his Infinity - from the very instincts of our Nature, -

The truth is - it seems to me, - that we are unable to reason clearly or satisfactorily

comprising Infinity or absolute perfection—
The Subject is too vast for our little minds,—
But there is a Knowledge higher than the
Intellect can give,— The souls faculty of
Intuition,— or what I call "Faith",— in its
development,— treads with confidence the airy heights—
where reason grows faint and giddy—
Faith is our only guide in the dark where
we sink,— Placing our hand in her's,— we
are led through gardens of delight— and
flower-strewn paths, out into the shining
plain beyond,— No matter what may be
our outward circumstances in life—
within, the Soul dwells in the Mellow
Atmosphere of a peace and confidence
which no storm can cloud—

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